

Latest TN Civil War 150 Doc Looks at "Rivers and Rails: Daggers of the Civil War"

Contributed by Joe Pagetta
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NASHVILLE, Tennessee -- May 9, 2013 -- As Charles Dickens might have described it, rivers and rails brought the best of times and the worst of times to 19th century Tennessee. "Rivers and Rails: Daggers of the Civil War," the latest episode in the "Tennessee Civil War 150" series, a joint venture between Nashville Public Television (NPT) and The Renaissance Center, explores how transportation by water and steel brought great prosperity to the state just before the Civil War, only to give the invading Union Army a highway directly into the Deep South, eventually helping force the Confederacy to its knees. "Rivers and Rails: Daggers of the Civil War," co-produced by the Emmy Award-winning team of Stephen Hall and Ken Tucker of The Renaissance Center, premieres Thursday, May 30 at 8 p.m. on NPT-Channel 8. Hall researched and wrote the script; Tucker developed the visual design and edited the piece. Images with period photographs floating along a river bank are particularly poignant in the open and close of the program. It is the seventh episode in the "Tennessee Civil War 150" series, a multi-part project coinciding with the Sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War. Previous installments include "Secession," "Civil War Songs and Stories," "No Going Back: Women and the War" and "Shiloh: The Devil's Own Day" and "No Looking Back: African American and the War." All have either won or been nominated for regional Emmy Awards. "We didn't want this to be a documentary focused completely on military strategy," Hall said. "It was important to show how the lives of ordinary citizens were disrupted and destroyed. The story shows not only how the Union used boats and trains to their tactical advantage, but how people in Tennessee suffered because of it." As Dr. Brian McKnight of the University of Virginia puts it, "Ultimately, whoever controls the rivers and the rails, particularly in Tennessee, wins the war." "Commanders took the attitude that the rivers and rails had to be controlled at all costs," Hall said, "and that cost was paid by families who were caught in the middle of the conflict. If you lived in a town on the river or with easy access to the rails, you could count on misery coming your way." Viewers meet several people whose lives were caught in the struggle between North and South. Nannie Haskins was a 16-year-old girl who wrote about the Union occupation of Clarksville. Samuel Dold Morgan was a Nashville businessman who wrote the charter for Tennessee's first railroad. The achievement brought him both prosperity and suffering. One of his descendents, Ruth Warner, helps tell his story. The documentary also re-enacts a bridge burning incident in East Tennessee in which supporters of the Union Army attempted an uprising against the Confederacy in their community, with tragic results. In addition to Dr. McKnight, the documentary includes a prestigious lineup of historians, including Dr. Carroll Van West, MTSU; Fred Prouty, Tennessee Historical Commission; Dr. Minoa Uffelman, Austin Peay State University, Dr. Wayne Moore, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Jim Ogden, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and Melinda Senn, Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History. After its premiere on NPT, "Rivers and Rails: Daggers of the Civil War" will be broadcast on other PBS stations around the state. Previous episodes have been distributed nationwide via American Public Television. Both NPT and The Renaissance Center were recently honored with a TN Historical Commission Certificate of Merit for 2013 in the category "Book/Public Programming" for "No Going Back: Women & The War," "Shiloh: The Devil's Own Day" and "Crisis of Faith." The award recognizes projects that contribute to the history and historic preservation efforts in Tennessee. "Tennessee Civil War 150" is made possible in part by The Tennessee National Heritage Area, the Tennessee Dept. of Education and the Tennessee Sesquicentennial Commission. About Nashville Public Television Nashville Public Television is available free and over the air to nearly 2.2 million people throughout the Middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky viewing area, and is watched by more than 600,000 households every week. The mission of NPT is to provide, through the power of traditional television and interactive telecommunications, high quality educational, cultural and civic experiences that address issues and concerns of the people of the Nashville region, and which thereby help improve the lives of those we serve. About the Renaissance Center The Renaissance Center is a state-of-the-art facility for fine arts, performing arts, media production, technology and education located about 35 miles from downtown Nashville in Dickson, Tennessee. The Renaissance Center includes several art galleries, the Gaslight Dinner Theatre, the Renaissance Players Community Theatre, the Tennessee Artisan Market and the CyberSphere Digital Theater. Support for the arts programs are from the Tennessee Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts. www.rcenter.org, (615) 740-5572, 740-5600, or toll-free: (888) 700-2300. Contact: Steve Hall / The Renaissance Center 615-948-0274 steve.hall@rcenter.org